

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 AID-20 PC-04 IO-14 DRC-01 EB-11

COME-00 TRSE-00 AGR-20 /189 W

----- 062225

R 071255Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7747

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 1386

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR NG

SUBJECT: NIGER MILITARY GOVERNMENT MAKES POPULAR MOVES.

REF: NIAMEY 1338 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ACTION AND STATEMENTS OF SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL
IN FIRST THREE WEEKS FOLLOWING TAKE-OVER HAVE BEEN WELL
RECEIVED BY POPULACE. GRAIN PRICES HAVE BEEN REDUCED AND
MINIMUM WAGE LEVELS INCREASED. GOVERNMENT HAS STEPPED
UP DELIVERIES AND DISTRIBUTIONS GRAIN TO RURAL AREAS. PUBLIC
ALSO BEING WEWL SUPPLIED WITH ACCOUNTS OF ALLEGED SINS OF
FORMER REGIME. NEW GOVERNMENT RIDING WAVE OF POPULARITY. END
SUMMARY.

1. SMC HAS SO FAR SHOWN SKILL IN SAYING AND DOING

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RIGHT THINGS. TO RELIEVE ECONOMIC PRESSURES ON URBAN

POPULACE WHO HAVE LONG BEEN SQUEEZED BETWEEN RISING PRICES AND STATIC WAGES, NEW REGIME FIRST LOWERED PRICE OF CEREAL GRAINS SOLD BY OPVN (NATIONAL CEREALS OFFICE), ESTABLISHED MAXIMUM PRICES OF GRAIN SOLD ON FREESMARKET, AND THEN RAISED MINIMUM HOURLY WAGE BY 60 PERCENT. GOVERNMENT ALSO MAKING EXTRA EFFORTS TO ACCELERATE DELIVERY GRAIN TO RURAL AREAS AND TO LIBERALIZE DISTRIBUTION OR SALE OF STOCKS ALREADY IN PLACE. MILITARY HAS ADDED OWN VEHICLES TO OPVN FLEET AND NOW PRESIDES OVER DISTRIBUTION. (FORMER GOVERNMENT RESTRICTED PARTICIPATION OF NIGERIEN ARMY N RELIEF OPERATIONS TO MINOR BACKGROUND ROLE.)

2. IN MOVE WHICH WAS CALCULATED TO DEMONSTRATE CONCERN OF NEW GOVERNMENT, MILITARY CONFISCATED SEVERAL HUNDRED TONS OF GRAIN FOUND ON PRESIDENT'S FARM AND IN VILLAS OF FORMER MINISTERS AND MADE DISTRIBUTION ON SPOT TO POPULACE. IT APPEARS THAT LARGE PERCENTAGE OF RELIEF GRAIN STILL IN ORIGINAL SACKS. GRAIN PROBABLY ILLEGALLY OBTAINED SINCE GOVERNMENT HAD ISSUED DECREE LAST AUGUST FORBIDDING ANY PERSONS EARNING OVER 20,000 CFA PER MONTH FROM PURCHASING RELIEF SUPPLIES. MILITARY HAS MADE POINT THAT WHILE PEOPLE IN DIRE NEED, FORMER LEADERS NOT ONLY HOARDED ILLEGALLY ACQUIRED GRAIN BUT IN SOME CASES FED IT TO THEIR CATTLE. (SEVERAL TONS WERE REPORTEDLY FOUND AT MADAME DIORI'S CATTLE FEED LOT OPERATION.)

3. IN ANOTHER MOVE TO DEMONSTRATE TO MASSES NEW GOVERNMENT HAS THEIR INTERESTS AT HEART, MINISTER OF HEALTH ANNOUNCED AFTER RECENT VISIT TO NIAMEY HOSPITAL THAT PATIENTS WOULD NO LONGER BE FORCED TO LIE ON FLOOR. MINISTER SENT TROOPS TO ROUND UP SOME 250 BEDS FOR HOSPITAL FROM CITY'S LYCEES WHERE DORMITORIES WERE CLOSED DOWN BY PREVIOUS REGIME. MINISTER ALSO PUBLICLY CRITICIZED HOSPITAL STAFF FOR FILTHY CONDITIONS OF WARDS AND LACK OF CONCERN FOR PATIENTS.

4. ESTABLISHMENT OF INVESTIGATING COMMISSION HAS BEEN

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MUST FOR SMC SINCE ONE OF MAIN THEMES FOR JUSTIFYING COUP HAD BEEN CORRUPTION OF FORMER REGIME. NEW COMMISSION HAS ALREADY BEGUN WORK AND SOME PRELIMINARY RESULTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED. MINISTER OF INFORMATION LAMBASTED OPVN (NATIONAL CEREALS OFFICE) IN RECENT RADIO BROADCAST FOR INEFFICIENCY AND LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY. ALLEGATIONS WERE ALSO MADE OF EMBEZZLEMENT AND THEFT BY LOWER LEVEL EMPLOYEES. ACCUSATIONS AGAINST OPVN NOT ONLY CONTAIN SOME

DISTORTIONS BUT THAT ORGANIZATION IS BEING BLAMED FOR MATTERS BEYOND ITS CONTROL. NEVERTHELESS, PUBLIC IN MOOD TO AGREE WITH MINISTER'S CHARGES AND EAGER TO HEAR OF FURTHER SCANDALS.

5. CURRENTLY ONE OF NIAMEY'S FAVORITE SUBJECTS OF CONVERSATION IS RECOUNTING INCIDENTS OF CORRUPTION AND GREED OF FORMER REGIME. THERE IS QUOTE NOW IT CAN BE TOLD ATMOSPHERE UNQUOTE AND STORIES ABOUT MADAME DIORI AND SEVERAL OF EX-MINISTERS ARE LEGION. MANY STORIES INVOLVING EX-PRESIDENT DIORI HOWEVER ARE ACCOUNTS OF HOW HE TRIED TO BLOCK OR IN SOME WAY COMPENSATE FOR SOME ILLEGAL OR UNFAIR BUSINESS DEALS OF HIS WIFE.

6. COMBINATION OF SERIES OF CROWD PLEASING GOVERNMENTAL ACTIONS PLUS BACKLASH AGAINST FORMER REGIME HAS WON SMC WIDE-SPREAD SUPPORT. HARSH FACTS OF SAHELIAN GIME HAS WON SMC WIDE-SPREAD SUPPORT. HARSH FACTS OF SAHELIAN LIFE WILL EVENTUALLY BRING EUPHORIC PHASE TO END. FOR MOMENT, HOWEVER, NEW GOVERNMENT RIDING WAVE OF POPULARITY. BUCHE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, GRAINS, PRICES, WAGE RATES, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974NIAMEY01386
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740110-0508
From: NIAMEY
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740568/aaaacizy.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: NIAMEY 1338 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 APR 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <04 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NIGER MILITARY GOVERNMENT MAKES POPULAR MOVES.
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, NG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005